



HEARD ACROSS MONTANA

An electronic newsletter in support of public safety services in Montana
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IM Weekly Highlights



- The new tower is now installed at the Mauer site in Beaverhead County.
- Microwave crews are installing equipment at the Nixon and High Flat sites this week in Gallatin County for the PSIC-2 Project.
- Aviat Networks made site visits to Eastern Tier sites to gather remaining information to complete microwave engineering. These microwave hops will provide connectivity to Northern Tier sites, the second master controller, and four additional trunking sites in Dawson, Richland and Custer Counties.

Homeland Security Border Patrol Brass Hear about IM

By Ian Marquand marquand.im@gmail.com

Talk about having the right audience! On Wednesday, Aug. 25, IM Executive Director Kevin Bruski took part in a round-table discussion with Secretary of Homeland Security, Janet Napolitano, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Alan Bersin.



The discussion, which took place in the town of Sunburst in northern Toole County, also included U.S. Senators Max Baucus and Jon Tester, plus representatives of local law enforcement, sovereign Indian nations and CBP installations in Montana. Members of the Montana Legislature also attended.

The discussion focused on a number of themes, including:

- *Interoperable communications is very important to local and federal law enforcement agencies and must be adequately funded.*
- *There is a need for more "boots on the ground" along Montana's border with Canada. Local law enforcement and the Border Patrol simply don't have enough personnel to guard the entire border and there is a need for more funding in order to do the job well and work together effectively. (Thanks were provided to the Senators, the Secretary and the*

Commissioner for implementation of the "Operation Stonegarden" program.)

- *Congress should work to change distribution formulas for Homeland Security grant funding, with additional emphasis on covering large geographic areas (like Montana) while still serving population centers.*
- *IM and the state of Montana would appreciate assistance in amending or writing a new communications treaty between the U.S. and Canada, so that public safety officials can talk across the border by radio.*

Some of those themes—notably cross-border communications and grant formulas—were also raised in a "town hall" meeting at the Border Patrol facility in Havre. In that session, Secretary Napolitano said a treaty amendment on public safety communications is also on her priority list. Senator Baucus stated he will continue to work toward making grant formulas more friendly to large, less-populated states such as Montana.

In addition, Bruski spoke with Bersin about IM's interest in providing interoperable service to Customs and Border Protection officers. *"The Commissioner was very receptive,"* Bruski said afterward, noting that the CBP is already planning to integrate into Washington State Patrol's Integrated Wireless Network (IWN.)

Bruski also stated that, *"The Commissioner said he'd get us information about how that integration will happen in Washington state. That will help us understand how we can work together in Montana."*

As for the chance to speak directly to key federal decision-makers, Bruski said, *"These conversations happened because Senators Tester and Baucus brought the Secretary and the Commissioner to Montana. It was a great opportunity that should help the project move forward even further."*

Local law enforcement participants in the round-table included Glacier County Sheriff Wayne Dusterhoff, Toole County Undersheriff Mike Lamey, Liberty County Sheriff Richard Burrows, and Whitefish Chief of Police Bill Dial.

Other participants included Indian Nations Representative Robert DesRosier, Port of Sweetgrass Director Larry Overcast and CPB Havre Sector Deputy Chief Chris Richards. Legislators included MT Sen. Jerry Black of Shelby, MT Sen. John Brenden of Scobey and MT Rep. Llew Jones of Conrad.

IM Shares Business Plan With County Leaders

By Ian Marquand marquand.im@gmail.com

Last year, as August entered its final days, Interoperability Montana staff was in the midst of a major outreach effort around Montana, holding more than 40 meetings in a three-month period and collecting valuable input about the project's future direction.

This year another major outreach effort has commenced. Starting August 16, visits with offices of county commissioners around the state were held to share details of IM's new business plan. Specifically, counties are being advised of the following specifics, as defined by the IM Project Directors at their June and August meetings:

- *IM's project scope, coverage goals and policies on private sector partnerships.*
- *The intent to finish current projects but begin re-directing some federal grant money to operations.*
- *How IM intends to finance operations and maintenance, including the establishment of user fees.*
- *How IM will reimburse site owners for their maintenance expenses.*

The IMPD approved the business plan at its August 10 meeting. The next day, meetings around the state were scheduled. So far, visits with commissioners in two dozen counties from Virginia City to Plentywood, and from Ekalaka to Shelby have transpired. Many of those meetings took place in counties where none were held last year. More county visits are scheduled for the coming weeks in locations from Lewistown to Libby. In those cases where visits to commissioners in person cannot take place due to conflicting schedules, information will be sent to them by IM.

Already, valuable comments have been received and questions imposed that may help guide the IMPD as it makes final decisions about the level of user fees and other associated issues at its October 5th meeting.

Counties are also being informed about 2011 Montana Legislature preparations, including interaction that will take place with the Montana Association of Counties at its Interoperability Committee meeting, which will take place September 8 in Helena.

It takes planning, coordination and a lot of road miles to make these meetings happen, but all the effort is well worth it.

Region 25 700 MHz Regional Planning Meeting to Take Place

By Dan Sullivan dsullivan@mt.gov

There will be a 700 MHz Regional Planning Committee meeting on August 31, 2010 from 1-4 pm, Mitchell Building Room 160, 125 N. Roberts, Helena.

Some Background: In 1998, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) established a structure to allow Regional Planning Committee's (RPCs) optimal flexibility to meet state and local needs, encourage innovative use of the spectrum, and accommodate new and unanticipated developments in technology and equipment. There are fifty-five RPCs, and each committee is required to submit its plan for the General Use spectrum. The entire State of Montana makes up Region 25.

Planning for the 700 MHz spectrum began in 2002, but Region 25 has not yet submitted a 700 MHz Plan to the FCC. Although Montana Public Safety does not utilize the 700 MHz spectrum at this time, the advent of multi-band and software defined radios will make this spectrum valuable in the future, and a comprehensive plan must prepare for that eventuality.

Anyone is interested in 700 MHz planning is encouraged to attend. Attendees will be briefed on the draft plan and asked for comments and recommendations. A copy of the draft 700 MHz Plan and meeting information/agenda can be found at <http://pssb.mt.gov/default.mcp.x>.

For questions or comments, contact PSSB Representative Scott Bradford (sbradford@mt.gov); Region 25 Chairman/IM Executive Director Kevin Bruski (kbruski@interopmtproject.org); or Vice Chairman Jerry Dupler (timberline@jeffbb.net).

Upcoming Meetings

Tues., Aug 31

700 MHz Regional Planning Committee
Helena • 1:00 – 3:00 pm
Mitchell Bldg. Rm 160, 125 N. Roberts

Thurs., Sept. 2

Northern Tier
Havre • 9:00 am – noon
Great Northern Inn, 1345 1st St.

Thurs., Sept. 16

Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) Consortium
Helena • 10:00 am - 1:00 pm
MACo Offices, 2715 Skyway Dr.

Thurs., Sept. 16

I-15/90 Corridor Consortium
Butte • 8:00 am – 5:00 pm
Chamber of Commerce, 1000 George St

Mon., Sept. 27

IM Technical Committee (IMTC)
Helena • 9:00 am - 3:00 pm
MACo Offices, 2715 Skyway Dr.

Sun.-Thurs., Sept. 26 - 30

Annual MACo Conference
Billings • Crown Plaza, 27 N. 27th St.